How "greedy" is the French imperative?

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0. Introduction

Recently Rivero (1994) and Rivero & Terzi (1995) proposed that with respect to a typology of imperatives, languages fall into two distinct syntactic types: imperative Vs either have a distinct syntax (class I) or they distribute like other verbs (class II).[1] In both classes imperative verbs (may) move to C, but the trigger for this movement is crucially different: In class I movement is triggered by Greed, in class II by Enlightened Self-interest. In this paper we try to integrate French imperatives in this model. At first sight French does not fit: it seems to be neither class I nor class II. Upon closer inspection, however, French turns out to have developed from a class II (until roughly 1500) into a class I type language. Modern French differs from other type I languages in that the imperative can be negated. We will show that the interaction of the checking of features of the negative head *ne* and of the imperative verb permits an account for the properties of the French imperative, which, although part of class I, is not "greedy".

1. A typology

Rivero (1994) and Rivero & Terzi (1995) (henceforth R&T) propose to divide languages in two classes with respect to imperatives:[2] class I where imperative Vs have a distinct syntax and class II where imperative Vs lack a distinct syntax. In both language types imperative verbs may move to C. However, the trigger of such a movement is different according to R&T: class I imperative verbs move to satisfy or check one of their own features, whereas class II imperative verbs move to satisfy requirements of a clitic associate. In R&T's formulation of Last Resort, this principle contains two clauses: clause A corresponds to the strong version of the Principle of Greed (Chomsky 1993), clause B corresponds to Enlightened Self-Interest (Lasnik 1995):

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[1] I would like to thank Hans Broekhuis, Joost Dekkers and Maarten de Wind for helpful comments. All errors are mine.

[2] Rivero and Terzi also consider the morphological properties of imperative verbs and the location of what they call the illocutionary feature in both classes. In this paper, we are only concerned with the syntactic properties.

(1)   A) Movement can only satisfy properties of the moved item itself
       B) Movement can also satisfy properties of an Associate[3]

According to R&T verb movement in class I imperatives is triggered by clause A, whereas in class II clause B is the trigger.

Let us take a closer look at the two characteristics which make the imperatives of class I distinctive: their position with respect to clitic objects and the impossibility of negating them.

First, in class I languages Imperatives are unique in preceding · clitic pronouns, as in (2) and (4). In non-imperative clauses verbs always follow clitics in these languages, as in (3) and (5):

(2)   Diavase to!   (Modern Greek)   [V-CL]
          read   it
(3)   To   diavases
          [you] it are reading
(4)   Libros   lee-les!   (Modern Spanish) [V-CL]
          books   read-to them
(5)   Libros   les   leiste   ayer
          books   to them [you] read yesterday

In class II languages, in contrast, imperative verbs pattern like other verbs: they either precede or follow clitic pronouns. In Serbo-Croatian, for example, clitics appear in second position.[4] Whenever there is an XP in first position, as in (7) and (9), the verb does not move to C. It only moves if no other constituent has been fronted, as in (6) and (8), in order to "save" the derivation from crashing: V-to-C movement in these languages falls under clause B) of Last Resort.

(6)   Citajte je!   (Serbo-Croatian) [V-CL]
          read   it
(7)   Knjige   im   citajte!   [XP-CL-V]
          Books   to them read!
(8)   Citate   je
          [you] are reading   it

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(9)   Lica   im   razaznaje
        Faces   to them [he] distinguishes

The second syntactic characteristic which distinguishes the two types of language is the possiblity of negating imperatives. In class I languages true imperatives cannot be negated, whereas other verbal constructions can, as illustrated in the following examples:

(10)   *Den/mi diavase!   (MoGr)
        neg   read
(11)   Den diavases
        neg [you] are reading
(12)   *no   lee!   (MoSp)
        neg   read
(13)   No   leiste
        [you] neg   read

According to R&T the incompatibility of negation and imperatives in these languages can be explained in purely syntactic terms: Neg heads a NegP projection located between CP and IP, Neg is a non-incorporating head, hence constitues a Minimality barrier that V cannot bypass in order to license the imperative feature in C. In other words, Neg prevents V from reaching C. In class II languages, however, the situation is completely different. There, both imperatives and other verbal constructions can be negated:

(14)   ne   citajte!   (SC)
        neg   read
(15)   ne   citajte je!
        neg   read   it
(16)   ne   citate   je
        [you] neg   are reading   it
(17)   Knjige im   ne   citajte!
        books to them   neg   read

In Serbo-Croatian Neg incorporates into the verb and moves along to C if necessary, as in (15) and (16). If another constituent is fronted, as in (17), Neg + V does not raise to C, but stays in I, as expected. Also in type II languages that have a non-incorporating Neg, such as Ancient Greek, negation of imperatives is possible, as shown by R&T, since the imperative verb does not need to raise to C to satisfy any features.

2. Modern French Imperatives

In elaborating their typology, R&T do not discuss Modern French. Let us take a closer look at it here. In modern French imperative verbs are unique in preceding clitics; in all other verbal constructions clitics precede the verb, and not the other way around:

imperative
(18)   donne-le-lui!
         give-it-(to)him/her
(19)   *le lui donne!

indicative
(20)   tu   le   lui   donnes
         you   it   (to)him/her   give
(21)   *tu donnes le lui

The following example shows that this is not related to a ban on clitics in first position:[5]

(22)   le   lui   donnes-tu?
         it   (to)him/her   give-you

Therefore, we can conclude that as far as this syntactic property is concerned, Modern French imperatives pattern like the Spanish and Modern Greek ones, belonging to Rivero, Rivero & Terzi's class I.

As for the second syntactic property, however, Modern French is different from the class I languages in allowing imperatives to be negated:

(23)   ne   parle   pas!
         neg   speak   not

Moreover, in negative imperatives, the verb does not precede the object clitics, as in affirmative imperatives (18), but it follows them, as in non-imperative clauses (20),(22):

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[5] Note that this type of question (subject clitic inversion) is traditionnally analysed as involving movement of the CL+V cluster to C (see e.g. Rizzi & Roberts 1989). Recently, however, several linguists, including Kayne 1994, have argued that these questions do not involve movement to C, contrary to (positive) imperatives. The difference in the diachronic development of the two constructions supports this (see Hulk 1995).

(24)   ne   le   lui   donne pas!
        neg   it   (to)him/her   give   not
(25)   *ne donne le lui pas!

The latter characteristic strongly suggests that the imperative verb has not moved to C in the negative imperative. It is not so clear why this should be so.[6] On the one hand, we have seen that object clitics can appear in first position in French, so the non-movement to C does not seem to be a class II property. On the other hand, the fact that the imperative verb can stay in a lower position, suggests that it does not have to move to C to check (one of its own) features, contrary to what we would expect if it were a class I-type imperative. In other words, we have a paradox: Modern French imperatives seem to be neither completely class I, nor completely class II. What are they then? Since V-to-C movement clearly plays a role, but only in the affirmative imperative and nowhere else in Modern French, let us take a look at older stages of French, where V-to-C was a more general phenomenon. Maybe the modern French imperative construction is a historical "residu".

3. A diachronic scenario of French imperatives

3.1 Early Old French. In early Old French, and in other medieval Romance languages, object clitics could not appear in first position. This ban on clitic first orders is called the Tobler-Mussafia law. When a clitic would otherwise come first, the verb moves to first position and enclisis follows. In this respect imperatives behaved just like other verbs: they either precede or follow object clitics (cf. de Kok, Skarup, Foulet), as illustrated by the following sentences. Moreover, these data show that Old French imperatives could be negated and allowed overt pronominal subjects, just like other verbs.

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[6] In a recent analysis of Modern French imperatives, Rooryck (1992) gives a syntactic reason: according to him (cf. Rivero) *ne* blocks V-to-C movement in French imperatives. This is rather implausible, however. First, it is usually assumed (cf. Pollock, Beletti among others) that in French NegP is located in a low position, just above VP. If the negative head *ne* would block V-movement across it, we would expect that no finite verb could ever reach T or Agrs. This is clearly not the case. Second, if we would assume that *ne* is an incorporating head, which moves along with V, we would expect it to also move along with V to C in imperatives, which is not the case, as shown by the position of the clitics with respect to the verb. Rooryck (p.c.) says that he no longer thinks his 1992 analysis is correct. He now suggests that some semantic incompatibility between the negative operator and the imperative operator is responsible for the non-movement of the V-cluster to C in negative imperatives.

imperatives:
(26)   faites **le** vus   de gret!   [V-CL]
        do   it   you(=subject) willingly
        (Roland, Foulet p.244)
(27)   a   autre   **le** demandez ...   [XP-CL-V]
        to   another it   ask
        (Artu:82,30; de Kok p.78)
(28)   hastivement **en**   vien, kar ...   [XP-CL-V]
        quickly   there-of come, for ...
        (QLR:19,8; de Kok p.79)
(29)   ne   **t'en**   caut, Rainelet   [NEG-CL-V]
        neg you of it worry
        (Foulet, p.123)

interrogatives:
(30)   se ge l' envi,   tenras **le** tu?
        if I it want,   will give it you   [V-CL]
        (St.Pierre & le Jongleur 190, Sk. p376)
(31)   sez   **le** tu ? (Artu:43,7; de Kok p.82)   [V-CL]
        know it   you
(32)   que **l'en**   volez   vos?   [WH-CL-V]
        what it of it want   you
        (Tristan pr.257.12, Sk.p.154)

declaratives:
(33)   veit **le** li   reis   [V-CL]
        sees it   the king
        (le Charroi de Nimes 1.58; Sk./de Kok)
(34)   a   ce   **le**   reconut (Eust.34,3, de K.p75)   [XP-CL-V]
        at   this him   recognizes [he]

This fronting of the verb in OF is generally analysed as movement to C (cf.Roberts 1993). It is likely to be a clause B)-last resort-type of movement, not triggered by the requirement to check its own feature, since only taking place when no other element is fronted, in order to satisfy some requirement of the clitic. It appears to be the case then that Old French is a type II language in Rivero & Terzi's terminology; it patterns the same way as Serbo-Croatian and Ancient Greek.

3.2 Further developments. The ban on clitic first orders quickly disappeared in the history of French: first in yes/no questions, then in declaratives and finally in subjunctive clauses clitics appeared in the first position followed by the verb (cf.de Kok). Compare (31) to (35) in this respect:

(35)   **la nos**   mosterez   vos? (Orange 528, Sk.p.355)   [CL-CLV]
         it   (to) us   will show   you

Interestingly, however, enclisis did not disappear in imperatives. On the contrary, it was generalised. Whereas in early Old French fronting of any constituent necessarily entailed proclisis, this was no longer the case. We see two parallel and probably related developements as far as imperatives are concerned: 1) fronting of a constituent gradually became impossible: "the left context emptied itself" in the words of Skarup and 2) enclisis became the rule, except in negative imperatives which until today require proclisis, as we have seen above. In that respect we could say that negative Modern French imperatives seem to be a historical residu, although the reason why the verb does not move to C in Modern French cannot be the same as in Old French.

There is still another point of difference between imperatives and other verbal constructions: whereas Old French was a null subject language, this possibility had disappeared around 1500, together with the possibility of subjects in postverbal position (see Roberts 1993 for an explanation for both phenomena in terms of resetting of the nominative case parameter). Around the same period imperatives did not allow postverbal pronominal subjects either, contrary to earlier periods (cf.(26)). However, imperatives continued to allow null subjects. As indicated by the impossibility of overt postverbal subjects, the licensing of these null subjects clearly could no longer be done "the Old French way".[7]

Summarizing, from 1550 onwards French imperatives no longer behave as other verbal constructions. They have changed and show a number of syntactic characteristics which are clearly different:
- in all imperatives except the negative, V moves to C and precedes the object clitics
- imperatives allow null subjects
- imperatives do not allow an XP in first position
We do not want to discuss the last two properties in any detail here, for reasons of space.[8]

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[7] Note that Modern French differs in this respect from a null subject language such as Modern Spanish, where over pronominal subjects in postverbal position are possible in imperatives:
(i)   compre-lo   usted
           buy-it   you(=subject)
Presumably, null subjects in imperatives in these languages can be licensed in the same way as in other constructions.

[8] It may be interesting, in the case of languages which normally do not allow null subjects, to relate the possiblity of null subjects in imperatives to the same phenomenon in child language and diaries. In all three cases the possibility of null subjects and therefore probably their licensing also, have something to do with the preceding discourse. In the case of French child language, for example, Rizzi has proposed that the null subject is a null constant that can only be licensed (by discourse) in the highest Spec position. It would be interesting to explore the same possibility for null subjects in

In the present paper we want to consider a bit more closely the interaction between verb movement and negation in Modern French imperatives.

4. The interaction of negation and verb movement in imperatives

The first question we would like to raise is that of the trigger for verb movement to C in French positive imperatives. In his 1992 article Rooryck argues that as far as tense is concerned, imperatives do not lack tense alltogether (contra e.g. Zanuttini 1991, Beukema & Coopmans 1989), and that the tense of imperatives is restricted to non-past, which can be represented by a [−realized] tense feature in C^9. Let us suppose that this is indeed the case. The question then arises how this feature can be checked. Plausibly, this can be done by the imperative verb which moves to C. We have seen, however, that the imperative verb does not move to C if it is negated. Consequently, if the imperative verb itself also has a [−realized] tense feature, this has to be [+interpretable] in the sense of Chomsky 1995, since it clearly does not need to be checked overtly. Moreover, since V-to-C is obligatory in positive imperatives in Modern French, we have to assume that this movement takes place not to check the feature of V, but in order to check the [−realized] tense feature of C. Consequently, this feature has to be [−interpretable]. In other words, the trigger of V-to-C movement is Enlightened Self-Interest (clause B of Last Resort).[10]

Let us now take a look at negative imperatives. Consider the following imperatives which represent another variety of French from the standard one:

(36)   fais-le!
(37)   fais-le   pas!
         do-it   not

Both in today spoken French in France and in Quebec, *ne* has disappeared from the language. Negation is expressed by *pas* only. The above sentences show that

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imperatives, where the impossibility of fronted XPs also suggests that the highest SPEC position is somehow involved (see also note 7). Further research will have to show this.

[9]   Rooryck assumes that the imperative AgrS and T ar identical to 'normal' tense morphology: they can be subjunctive or future. Therefore, the [−realized] tense feature is located in C. Infinitives also have a [−realized] tense feature, according to Rooryck, but there it is located in T itself. Moreover, in his analysis this [−realized] tense feature is associated to an anaphoric Agr feature, both in imperatives and in infinitives. We cannot discuss this analysis here for lack of space. We simply adopt the idea that in Modern French the imperative C contains a [-realized] tense feature.

[10] As for the question why the imperative verb leaves the clitics behind when moving to C, see Rooryck (1992) for a technical explanation in ECP terms and see Hulk (1995) for a more diachronically inspired description.

this has an immediate consequence for the word order in negative imperatives:[11] both in negative and in positive imperatives the verb precedes the clitics, consequently in both cases it has moved to C.

Could it be the case then that *ne* in Standard French can also check the [–realized] tense feature of the imperative C? Recently something similar has been proposed by Zanuttini (1994) who assumes that both an overt negative head and an imperative verb can check the strong head feature of POL in imperatives.[12] We cannot discuss Zanuttini's analysis in any detail here. Let us just slightly adapt her idea and propose that the negative head *ne* can check the [–realized] tense feature of the imperative C.

The question to be raised now is whether there is any independent reason to suppose that the negative head *ne* in Modern French has anything to do with tense features.

It is often assumed that *ne* in modern French is an incorporating negative head which moves along with the verb (cf.Pollock 1989). However, in infinitives *ne* can appear separated form the verb, as illustrated in the following sentence:

(38)   ne   pas   parler   l'italien,...
        neg   not   speak   italian

It is generally assumed that in these infinitives *ne* has moved to the head of TP. The close link between *ne* and T has also been invoked in the literature to explain the impossibility in French to negate past participles, which lack a tense feature:

(39)   *ne   pas   parti,...
        neg   not   left

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[11] In spoken French the following variety exists also:
  (i)   le   fais   pas!
         it   do   not
  We have to assume that an empty *ne* is present here which can check the [–realized] tense feature in C.

[12] In Zanuttini's analysis the projection PolP plays a role in the interpretation of negative clauses in all languages: in some languages the head Pol is strong and must be checked in overt syntax, in other languages Pol is weak and has to be checked at LF. Checking may be done either by the Neg head or by V. Unfortunately it is not entirely clear in her analysis whether this checking only takes place in imperatives or whether it is also operative in other negated clauses. Generally if a head is strong, it is strong in all constructions. In that case, however, it would predict that in regular negative sentences with a preverbal subject, this subject is in a pre-POL position! Moreover, it is not alltogether clear why she assumes that checking by a negative head could be done either overtly or covertly, but checking by V only at LF.

Therefore it is not implausible to assume that in order to be licensed[13] *ne* must be associated with the highest functional projection bearing a tense feature. We could say that *ne* has a [−interpretable] tense feature. In finite clauses the highest FP would be AgrsP which contains the V+T complex. In imperatives, however, C contains a tense feature and therefore *ne* would have to move there.[14] In this way the high position of *ne* in negative imperatives as opposed to its lower position in other negative clauses would be accounted for and we would avoid the problems raised by Zanuttini's analysis. If the idea that *ne* in French imperatives moves to C in order to meet its own licensing requirements is on the right track, this implies that *Greed*, clause A of Last Resort, would be the trigger for this movement.

Summarizing, we have suggested that C in modern French imperatives has a [−realized] tense feature which is [−interpretable] and consequently has to be checked in overt syntax. This checking can be done either by the negative head *ne* or by the imperative verb. Moreover, we argued that movement of *ne* to C is triggered by clause A of Last Resort, since *ne* has to check its own tense feature which is [−interpretable], whereas movement of V-to-C is triggered by clause B of Last Resort, since the imperative verb only moves overtly in order to check the [−realized] tense feature of its landingsite C; its own tense feature being [+interpretable].[15]

In order to explain the impossibility of negative "true" imperatives in languages such as Italian, Spanish and Catalan, we would have to assume that, contrary to what we suggested for French, the [−realized] tense feature of true imperative verbs in these languages is [−interpretable] and has to be checked in overt syntax.[16] Since the tense feature of the negative head also has to be checked in overt syntax, negation of a true imperative verb is not possible in these languages, because it would lead to a clash between two "greedy" heads.

In other words, a further distinction must be made within the imperative verbs belonging to class I: although all the imperative verbs of this class show syntactic patterns different from other verbs, some imperative verbs have an [−interpretable] [−realized] tense feature, whereas for other imperative verbs

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[13] This licensing requirement would of course not replace the well known Neg criterion which states that *ne* must be in a Spec-Head relation with *pas*. See Pearce (1995) who proposes a NEG identification principle which combines both requirements.

[14] Maybe we could even assume that the whole *ne*+CL+V complex moves there, if we want to maintain the idea that *ne* is an incorporating head.

[15] Moreover, we have to assume that somehow clause A of Last Resort is ranked higher than clause B: derivations where an element checks its own features have priority over derivations where an element checks the requirements of another element/position. Such a ranking has also been proposed by Rivero. Lasnik (p.c.) considers this to be a logical possibility.

[16] In contrast with the tense feature of "surrogate" imperative verb forms, such as subjunctives, which can be negated in these languages and therefore would have an [+interpretable] tense feature, just as all Modern French imperative verbs.

this feature is [+interpretable]. The first type of verbs has to move to C to check its own tense feature, the latter only moves to C out of Enlightened Self-Interest, to check the tense feature of the imperative C. We have seen that these checkings interact in an interesting way with the checking of the [−interpretable] tense feature of negative heads.

What about class II imperative verbs? We have seen that in Old French imperative verbs pattern in the same way as other verbs. All verbs move to C only to satisfy the requirement of an associate. This movement clearly falls under clause B of Last Resort: Enlightenend Self-Interest. The difference with verb movement in class I is that here it is not the checking of some special "imperative" feature of C such as [−realized] tense, that plays a role, but some other feature common to all C's and needed somehow to license clitics in second position. Further research will have to determine the exact nature of such a feature.

5. Conclusion

We started out by trying to fit the Modern French imperative in the typology proposed by Rivero & Terzi. It turned out that the two syntactic characteristics used by Rivero et al. to define the two classes lead to conflicting results: as far as the position the imperative verb with respect to clitics is concerned, French imperatives seem to belong to class I. As for the (im)possibility of negation, however, they seem to belong to class II. A global look at the history of the French imperative reveals that until the 16th century French imperatives were "class II". From that period onwards they changed and came a lot closer to class I, in the sense that they no longer moved to C in order to protect the clitics, according to Tobler-Mussafia, but for some other reason, which did not exist in non-imperatives, where V-to-C movement had long since disappeared. We adopt an idea by Rooryck, i.e. that the imperative C has a [−realized] tense feature. Following ideas by Zanuttini (1994) we assume that this feature could be checked, at least in French, either by the imperative V or by the Negative head. We argue that whereas checking by the negative head was motivated by Greed, this could not be the case for checking by the imperative V which could only be motivated by Enlightened Self-Interest. It might be interesting to raise the question now what is left of the original typology. One could perhaps say that by forcing Modern French imperatives into the mould, we have altered the whole classification. We argue that, although Modern French imperatives can be characterized as class I, the trigger for the movement of V-to-C is not Greed, but Enlightened Self-Interest. The latter trigger however crucially characterizes the V-to-C movement of R&T's class II imperatives! Moreover, we also propose that Greed is the trigger for movement to C in negative imperatives. Although we cannot solve this problem completely here, we can go as far as to say that Rivero

& Terzi correctly distinguish languages where imperative verbs pattern just as other verbs (their class II) from those where imperative verbs have a different syntax (their class I). In that pre-theoretical sense, Modern French imperatives clearly belong to class I. However, their (theoretical) explanation for such a distinction in terms of Greed versus Enlightened Self-Interest as trigger for V-to-C movement cannot be upheld: our brief study of the negative French imperative has shown that things are a lot more complex than they suggest. Moreover theoretical questions arise concerning the relation and ranking of the two clauses of Last Resort. Further research, both empirical and theoretical has to be done before we can give an satisfactory explanation for the complex properties of imperatives.

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